

4. Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) and Great Start to Quality (GSQ)

The Office of Great Start has a clear focus of data-driven early learning and care programs for continuous quality improvement. GSQ helps parents find early learning settings for their children and helps providers and educators improve the care they give to children. Sites, *inclusive of all classrooms under one Department of Human Services (DHS) Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL) child care license*, display in the system with a ranking of 1-5 stars. GSRP has always had a continuous improvement model and is a big part of this big picture!

Star interpretation

- ★ 1 Empty Star – Program meets basic health and safety licensing requirements. All other star ratings are blue:
- ★ 1 Star – Program meets licensing requirements and participates in Great Start to Quality.
- ★ 2 Star – Program demonstrates quality across some standards.
- ★ 3 Star – Program demonstrates quality across several standards.
- ★ 4 Star – Program demonstrates quality across almost all standards.
- ★ 5 Star – Program demonstrates highest quality.

Program Profile

An online platform holds all GSQ data. A Program Profile includes basic information about the type of program entering the system: registered family child care home, licensed group child care home or licensed child care center. The Program Profile is completed for one DHS regular license and includes all early childhood classrooms under the license. GSRPs may want to include the Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) as the secondary contact.

Self Assessment Survey

The Self Assessment Survey (SAS) is loosely based on PQA Form B and is aligned with Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality. The SAS can reflect individual classroom-level or site-wide program information. All GSRP classrooms must be part of a completed and submitted SAS in order for the quality star rating to post at the online platform.

Alternate Path

GSRP is eligible to participate in an expedited process, an alternate path to GSQ quality rating. To be posted as a 5 star program, Alternate Path programs with a 5 star SAS must request a validation and then a PQA FORM A score. An Alternate Path program becomes a 5 star program with a completed validation and a PQA Form A score high enough to qualify at the 5 star level (4.5 or higher). A program eligible for the Alternate Path can choose to use a GSQ Approved Rater or a GSQ Assessment Specialist. It is important to realize that an additional PQA Form A must be completed when GSRP chooses to work with a GSQ Assessment Specialist to document program quality.

Approved Rater and Unique Classroom Identifiers

A GSQ Approved Rater, with status as a PQA Reliable Assessor, can complete and document PQA Form A in the GSQ system. Many GSRP ECSs are Approved Raters. GSQ provides no financial supports for Approved Raters. The Approved Rater uses a unique computer-generated Classroom ID (that includes the program's license number) to record a completed PQA Form A. An online tutorial is available for ECSs to view and includes information on generation of the unique Classroom ID and how to enter the unique

classroom ID in the GSRP OnlinePQA. If the unique Classroom ID is not used, the PQA conducted by the Approved Rater will not count for GSQ.

Posted Program Ratings

All GSRP classrooms must be part of a completed and submitted SAS in order for the quality star rating to post at the online platform. The Early Childhood Contact (ECC) can see posted program ratings on the web based platform; but not ratings for GSRP classrooms where the SAS is not submitted. For those, contact the local RC director to verify program ratings. Alternately, the GSRP classroom may show evidence of a 3 star or higher rating by providing a copy of the individual SAS printed from the STARS platform. The ISD should be familiar with guidance on the steps for GSRP to participate in a Multi-Classroom Self-Assessment Survey.

Different Processes

The PQA is the classroom-level, program evaluation tool for both GSRP and GSQ, but there are differences to be aware of.

- GSRP requires use of the full PQA each year; Form A is completed for each unique teaching team and Form B is completed for each subrecipient.
- Posted GSQ star ratings are based on SAS data and PQA Form A scores; they remain valid in the system for two years.

Coordination

GSRP and GSQ have staff that implement PQA Form A and support data-driven improvement efforts.

- The ECS is the educational leader for GSRP teaching teams. PQA data and child outcome data are used together for continuous improvement efforts.
- The GSQ Improvement Consultant works predominately with programs other than GSRP, providing guidance and making comments on local quality improvement plans.

There are many advantages of intentional partnering at early childhood sites that house both GSRP and other early childhood programs. Collaboration can capitalize on similar responsibilities within roles of the GSRP ECS and the GSQ Improvement Consultant, such as using data to guide program improvement and to monitor and support change elements. Together with the GSRP ECS, the GSQ Improvement Consultant may consult with staff, communicating results and agreeing on strategies to reach goals.

Partnership can help the ECS and GSRP teaching teams have a stronger connection to the regional RC. GSRP staff can use the RC to assist enrolled families to find quality wrap-around child care and access a lending library of learning materials. The RC is a link to professional development and training opportunities that match teaching staff, support staff and family interests. The ECS can learn about training supports for GSRP Associate Teachers working toward CDA, AA or BA in early childhood education or child development.

As the early childhood leader at the ISD, the GSRP ECC keeps abreast of collaborative GSRP/GSQ efforts and represents GSRP at the Great Start Collaborative (GSC). Each GSC provides a format for local discussion and agreement on how all quality efforts fit together to support the local GSC strategic plan to accomplish better results for young children and families.

Adapted from *Coordinating the Great Start Readiness Program with Great Start to Quality*, Dec 2013.